

April 16, 2019

The Honorable Martin Looney
Senate President Pro Tempore

The Honorable Joe Aresimowicz
Speaker of the House

The Honorable Bob Duff
Senate Majority Leader

The Honorable Matthew Ritter
House Majority Leader

The Honorable Len Fasano
Senate Republican Leader

The Honorable Themis Klarides
House Republican Leader

Dear Leaders:

We write as Directors and Member Chief Executives of The Business Council of Fairfield County to express our belief that Connecticut's transportation infrastructure needs a reliable revenue stream to assure regular maintenance, enable new construction, and regularly introduce system enhancements.

The experience of states throughout the northeast demonstrates that electronic fare collection – modern tolls – are a reliable way to finance transportation operations and infrastructure investments.

For decades, Connecticut's transportation financing methods have led to deferred or stretched out maintenance and the avoidance of equipment replacements, capacity expansion and performance enhancing technology improvements. We have created a multi-billion-dollar queue of unfunded capital needs, worsening congestion, and mounting workforce productivity losses.

Connecticut's economy simply can't endure more self-inflicted harm.

The desire to avoid tolls has led to the creation of an inefficient, non-strategic set of funding mechanisms which frequently change, periodically cannibalize other revenue streams and, in turn, are raided to meet annual budget shortfalls.

The absence of tolls has also resulted in Connecticut subsidizing our neighboring states as non-resident trucks and cars use the roadways without paying towards their upkeep. Implementing tolls will leverage our residents' future investments with those paid by non-resident vehicles.

We share the concerns of those who worry that new funds will be diverted to non-transportation uses. The federal oversight that comes with the adoption of tolls on interstate highways and the passage of the "lockbox" referendum by Connecticut voters in November 2018 will both increase the financial integrity of the Special Transportation Fund (STF) and make it much more difficult to reallocate dedicated transportation funds to the General Fund. We understand that citizen vigilance also will be required to assure that today's commitments are kept. However, the realistic need to be vigilant in the future should not prevent us from addressing the transportation funding crisis we face today.

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Modernizing the state's highways, bridges and rail system will reduce the congestion commuters face daily, enable goods to flow more efficiently, and services to be provided more promptly. Adopting toll legislation in this session will start the process by permitting the finalization of the technical deployment plan, the development of a "residents first" system of discounts, and the prioritization and efficient implementation of safety, state of good repair, and new capacity projects already identified as essential within the state's current transportation plans.

Failure to adopt toll legislation in this session would be an acceptance of drifting economically downward, continuing to suffer a loss of jobs and a drain of talent.

The Business Council of Fairfield County supports tolls as an essential step toward the sustainable competitiveness of our state. We are honored to be joined by leaders from our Membership who share our commitment.

Sincerely,

Directors

*James Fitzgerald, Jr.
Pamela K. Elkow
Darrell Harvey
Karen Jeffers
Tim Brown*

*John Ciulla
Robert Granata
Steven Gold
Jennifer Tombaugh
Heather Ziegler*

Members

*John Garrison
Rey Giallongo
Margaret Keane
Eric Schadt*